DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 112 HE 015 504

AUTHOR Bogal-Allbritten, Rosemarie B.; And Others
TITLE Research Coursework in the Baccalaureate Nursing Curriculum: A Nationwide Study.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Bachelors Degrees; *Course Content; *Curriculum Design; Higher Education; National Surveys; *Nursing Education; *Research Methodology; Research Projects; School Surveys; Student Attitudes; Undergraduate Study

ABSTRACT

The status of nursing research content at the undergraduate level was investigated based on responses from 241 accredited bachelor of science (BSN) degree nursing programs. Sixty percent of the responding institutions were part of state university systems, while 39 percent were private, and 54 percent enrolled over 200 nursing majors. The class size for research courses generally ranged from 30 to 40 students. Courses were taught by a nursing faculty member 76 percent of the time and by a non-nursing faculty member 24 percent of the time. The 21-item questionnaire addressed course content, curriculum structure, and student attitudes toward research material. While research was accepted as a legitimate part of baccalaureate nursing education, a precise definition of research course content was lacking. There was little agreement on areas of emphasis in course content and curriculum. Questionnaire construction, interviewing techniques, document analysis, and coding and data reducing, for example, were emphasized in only 50 percent of the BSN programs. There also was little agreement on the type of project (individual vs. group) that should be used. It is suggested that there is a need for the integration of research content with the entire nursing curriculum, since the utilization of research has implications for the development of nursing theory and practice as well as for purposes of accountability in the field. It is also proposed that concrete guidelines for research course content and method at the BSN level are needed. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED222112

HE

RESEARCH COURSEWORK IN THE BACCALAUREATE NURSING CURRICULUM: A NATIONWIDE STUDY

by

Rosemarie B. Bogal-Allbritten, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Professional Studies
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071

Carolyn Marcum, BSN
Murray-Calloway County Hospital
Murray, KY 42071

Helen Raspberry
Student Nurse
Murray State University
Murray, KY 42071

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rosemarie B. Bogal-Allbritten
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE015 504

RESEARCH COURSEWORK IN THE BACCALAUREATE NURSING CURRICULUM: A NATIONWIDE STUDY

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the status of nursing research content at the undergraduate level. In the study reported, 241 accredited BSN programs were surveyed with the intent of clarifying the focus of their research curricula. The authors' findings suggest that guidelines for research content should be more specific. There was little agreement on areas of emphasis in course content and curriculum structure. Questionnaire construction, interviewing techniques, document analysis and coding and data reducing, for example, were emphasized in only 50 percent of the BSN programs. In addition, there was little agreement on the type of project (individual vs. group) which should be used. More critically, however, the authors see a need for the integration of research content with the entire nursing curriculum, since the utilization of research has implications for the development of nursing theory and practice as well as for purposes of accountability in the field.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

During the past thirty years, baccalaureate nursing education has moved from being a somewhat unclear process with questionable status to a professionally sanctioned educational endeavor. While the legitimacy of the BSN degree has been questioned by those who have completed diploma programs, the National League for Nursing views the baccalaureate degree as the entry-level degree for beginning professional nursing practice.

As in graduate education, NLN has developed curricular guidelines. One of the content categories to be included in baccalaureate nursing education is the research process. According to Cahall (1980):

> If nursing research is to be viewed as an integral part of nursing practice and as the way to test and expand nursing knowledge, research must be introduced in the very first nursing courses and must be tied to clinical practice.

While some individuals have in the past identified research as the domain of masters and/or doctoral programs (Rogers, 1961; Redmond, 1963; Noble, 1980), the National League for Nursing includes research in the baccalaureate curriculum. In the NLN publication, Characteristics of Baccalaureate Education for Nursing (1979), the League delineated the focus of research courses:

> . . . the graduate of the baccalaureate program in nursing is able to:
>
> 5. Improve service to the client by continually evaluating the effectiveness of nursing intervention and revise it accordingly.
>
> 7. Evaluate research for the applicability of its findings to nursing actions.
>
> 10. Participate in identifying and effecting needed change to improve delivery within specific health care systems.

As in graduate research education, specific content is not prescribed. This results in a variety of courses under the rubric of research with a wide range of content.

Specific information concerning this diversity, however, is virtually nonexistent. While a number of studies have looked at single approaches to the teaching of research in the nursing curriculum, such as the University of Cincinnati's three-quarter research sequence for senior nursing students (O'Grady and Haukenes, 1978), the "Tell Show and Do" method (Reed and Cooley, 1976), and the University of Hawaii Honors

Program (Burkhalter and Kim, 1976), only one study has attempted to take a comprehensive look at research preparation in baccalaureate nursing education. Thomas and Price (1980) found that "The majority of nursing faculty responding to their questionnaire viewed baccalaureate nursing graduates as playing consumer rather than participant roles in research." These findings have a number of implications for the content as well as the process used in teaching research in baccalaureate nursing programs.

Method

In order to further the state of baccalaureate nursing research courses, the authors constructed a 21-item questionnaire and sent it to all accredited BSN programs listed in the 1979-1980 National League for Nursing publication, "Baccalaureate Education in Nursing: Key to Professional Care in Nursing", (1979). The sample population included 302 accredited undergraduate nursing programs. Of the 302 questionnaires mailed, 241 were returned.

The sample consisted of programs located throughout the United States, with the highest percentage coming from the Middle Atlantic (21%), South Atlantic (16%) and East North Central (16%) regions. Sixty percent of these programs were part of state university systems, while another 39 percent were in private institutions. Fifty-four percent of the returned surveys were from schools where the enrollment for nursing majors was over 200 students.

Statistics on class size for research courses showed that 49 percent of the responding schools generally had classes with an enrollment of 30 to 40. Finally, courses were taught by a nursing faculty member

76 percent of the time, while in 24 percent of the cases they were taught by a non-nursing faculty member.

Data collection was carried out by using a survey format. The instrument consisted of a 21-item questionnaire subdivided to include data concerning course content, procedural methods in course presentation, and information about student attitudes toward research material. Questionnaires were mailed to 302 accredited BSN programs, with an overall response rate of 79 percent. Questionnaire items were developed so that interpretation might include use of percentages or a Likert scale format. Items were precoded to allow for later statistical analysis.

RESULTS

The following interpretation of findings subdivides data into three key areas: course content, curriculum structure, and student attitudes. Table 1 summarizes the findings about emphasis placed on key topic areas in the BSN research curriculum.

It is interesting to note that approximately 34 percent of the faculty surveyed did not discuss theory development as it relates to nursing practice areas (in this instance we are referring to practice issues). In like fashion, topic areas such as measurement, sampling, interviewing, field research, document analysis and evaluation research were not covered by 20 to 40 percent of undergraduate nursing research faculty.

From this we conclude that these key areas of instruction were not a common area of class discussion for one-fourth to two-fifths of the research faculty at the schools surveyed. While this percentage is

Table 1

RESEARCH COURSE CONTENT AREAS EMPHASIZED, BY PERCENTAGE

AREAS	ALWAYS	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	NEVER
Problem Formulation	93%	4%	2%	1%
Variable Relationships	74%	19%	7%	--
Hypothesis Development	64%	22%	12%	2%
Theory Development	41%	25%	26%	8%
Measurement Techniques	49%	30%	19%	2%
Sampling Techniques	56%	26%	16%	2%
Questionnaire Construction	34%	26%	33%	7%
Interviewing Techniques	34%	28%	32%	6%
Experimental Design	40%	25%	31%	4%
Field Research Methods	32%	30%	33%	5%
Document Analysis	31%	21%	33%	15%
Data Analysis	49%	24%	19%	8%
Coding and Data Reduction	21%	20%	38%	21%
Ethical Standards	83%	12%	4%	1%
Evaluation Research	48%	23%	20%	9%

certainly not representative of the majority of staffs, it is significant to note that this high a percentage of faculty generally did not include the above materials.

To further highlight course content, Table 2 examines statistical topic areas focused on within the class agenda. The majority of faculty stressed univariate data, percentages, table format, t test and chi square. However, inferential and/or correlational techniques such as measures of association, and correlation and regression analysis were not covered as frequently as needed in an introductory research course (possibly the only research course many students will take). For those universities or colleges in which the student is required to take a statistics course in addition to research methods, not presenting such statistical techniques may appear understandable. However, it may prove beneficial for faculty to integrate more statistical test interpretations along with research methods so that students see the relationship between the two.

In the area of project format, 30 percent of the faculty teaching research provided students the opportunity to complete individual research projects. Thirty-one percent of the faculty responding to this survey provided students with group project experiences. It is rather surprising, however, that 41 percent of the faculty who responded never used an individual project and 33 percent never used a group project with students. One might question this rather obvious underutilization of projects in teaching research. When the issue of primary emphasis of the course such as research interpretation versus ability to do actual research was raised, it was found that 78 percent of the respondents placed primary emphasis on research interpretation, while the other 22 percent indicated that

Table 2

STATISTICAL TOPICS EMPHASIZED IN RESEARCH COURSES

TOPICS	PERCENT
Univariate Data Presentation	55%
Percentages	89%
Use of Table Formats	86%
Bivariate Data Presentation	48%
t Test	62%
Analysis of Variance	49%
Chi Square	56%
Measurements of Association	10%
Correlation/Regression Analysis	37%
Path Analysis	1%
Factor Analysis	11%

primary emphasis was on doing actual research.

Attitudinally, the data illustrated that over half of the students entered a research class with a high degree of apprehension and a negative view of the subject matter. Fifty-seven percent of the reporting faculty cited this fact. In contrast, however, 88 percent commented that students left the research class with an appreciation of how they could better use this material in an actual work setting. It appears that many students began to appreciate the research process and generally understood its utility.

Faculty seemed to accommodate the needs of neither academically gifted students by offering more than one research course within the BSN program (13%) nor the needs of academically limited students, by offering a more moderately paced course (8%). This suggests that the research needs of students are individualized to a minimal extent.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While research is accepted as a legitimate part of baccalaureate nursing education, a precise definition of research course content is lacking. Even the primary goal of research is disputed. Although a number of authors place primary emphasis on consumerism rather than research capability at the BSN level, such "guidelines" did not receive overwhelming support from faculty members teaching research. It is rather unreasonable to expect that lack of agreement at the academic level can foster anything other than disagreement about the role of research at the practice level.

There appears to be a need for concrete guidelines for research course content and method at the BSN level. Hopefully, non-nursing faculty teaching research would adhere to those guidelines. It also

seems, however, that some attention must be paid to the individual differences of nursing students taking research. In other words, are we presently making the assumption that students who cannot meet the standards of the research sequence should be eliminated from the program?

Secondly, there needs to be a closer integration of the research sequence into the total curriculum. If research is seen as a valid skill with a legitimate role in the undergraduate curriculum, the faculty teaching other courses, especially the clinical courses, must make a commitment to this integration. Research taught as a separate discipline--often by non-nursing faculty--cannot help but be seen as an "extra" rather than an integral part of undergraduate nursing education.

REFERENCES

1. CAHALL, JB. Research: A Vital Component Throughout the Nursing Curriculum. J Nurs Educ 19: 19-27, 1980.

2. ROGERS, ME. Educational Revolution in Nursing. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1961.

3. REDMOND, MM. Evolution and Characteristics of Graduate Education in Nursing in Frank, Sister CM and Heidgerken, LE (eds): Perspectives in Nursing Education. Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1963.

4. NOBLE, MA. Teaching Clinical Research: Idealism versus Realism. J Nurs Educ 19: 34-37, 1980.

5. National League for Nursing, Division of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs: Characteristics of Baccalaureate Education in Nursing. New York, National League for Nursing, 1979.

6. O'GRADY, DJ and HAUKENES, E. Teaching Research Methods to Undergraduates in Nursing--Learning by Doing. J Nurs Educ 17: 48-52, 1978.

7. REED, JC and COOLEY, S. Teaching Research by the "Tell," "Show," and "Do" Process. J Nurs Educ 15: 18-20, 1976.

8. BURKHALTER, PK and KIM, HT. The Honors Program Approach to Undergraduate Research in Nursing. J Nurs Educ 15: 21-25, January, 1976.

9. THOMAS, B and PRICE, MM. Research Preparation in Baccalaureate Nursing Education. Nursing Research 29: 259-261, 1980.

10. National League for Nursing. Baccalaureate Education in Nursing: Key to Professional Care in Nursing. New York, National League for Nursing, 1979.

NOTES

1. Middle Atlantic states included: Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. South Atlantic states included: West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. East North Central states included: Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

2. Forty-five percent of the surveys returned indicated that a statistics course was included in the basic requirement for a BSW degree.